CHRIST AS A TEACHER

JOHN W. WAYLAND

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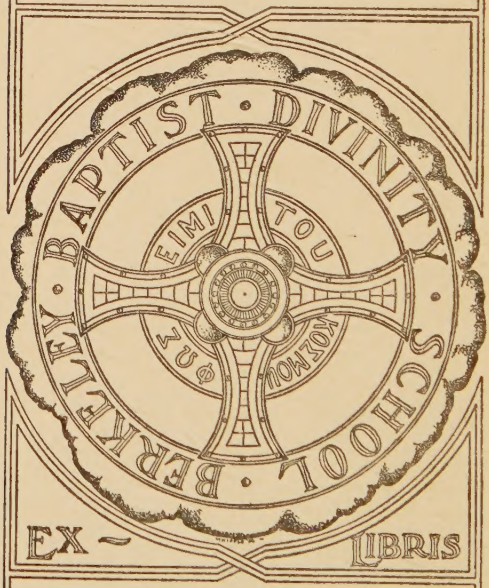

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CHRIST AS A TEACHER

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By

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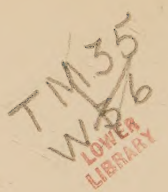

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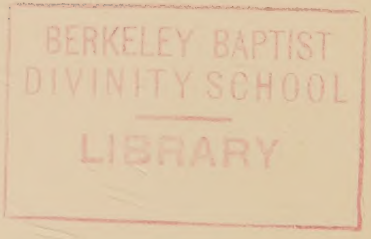

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Preface

The substance of the following brief chapters has been presented from time to time to different groups of students and teachers in normal schools and Sunday schools. In the present form it is offered to the teaching profession and the general public in the hope that it may prove more widely helpful. To those who study method the skill of the Great Teacher is a growing marvel; to those who seek power his life is a perennial dynamic.

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Contents

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Truth and Freedom	1
II.	His Method	7
III.	His Aim	25
IV.	The Matter of His Teaching	30
V.	His Pupils	40
VI.	His Life	55
VII.	His Consciousness of a Mission	62

I

Truth and Freedom

It is always interesting to know the estimate that one poet puts upon another poet, that one physician puts upon another physician, that one lawyer puts upon another lawyer; the estimate that one teacher puts upon another teacher. If both the poets are geniuses, if both the physicians are benefactors, if both the lawyers are chancellors, or if both the teachers are masters, the estimate that one puts upon the other is all the more interesting, all the more important.

One night in old Jerusalem two great teachers met. Each made a careful estimate of the other. For days, perhaps, they had been studying each other, and their conclusions are of exceeding interest; but for the present we shall limit our attention to what just one of them said:

we shall notice only what the lesser master said of the greater. He said: "We know that thou art a teacher come from God."

This was the estimate that Nicodemus put upon Jesus.

It was a high estimate, by high authority. No other teacher since that time has ever been quite worthy of the same estimate, applied in the same way. Yet it was a true estimate, truly stated. Nicodemus was seeking the truth. He found the truth in the Great Teacher.

The students of the ages may well sit with Nicodemus at the feet of Jesus. Young Saul of Tarsus at the feet of Gamaliel was less fortunate. All may be pupils and hear his words; those who are teachers will study his methods; those who are prophets will seek his aims; and every apostle will share his power.

That Christ did his work so largely by teaching rather than by some other process is highly significant. If others could have chosen for him his story would be different. Many of the Jews expected him to

be a great conqueror, like David; but he chose to be a teacher. The peasants and the fishermen of Galilee wanted to erect a throne and make him a king, but he chose to be a teacher. He was tempted to use his miraculous powers for glory and for gain, but he chose to be a teacher. He could have been a politician, and have purchased a following with high places on his right hand and on his left, but he chose to be a teacher. He could have been rich, and could have done much good work with money, but he chose to be a teacher. The Jews, most of them, challenged him to show signs and work wonders, but he chose to be a teacher. The inquisitive, restless, faithless Greeks hoped that he would put forth curious new philosophies, but he chose to be a teacher. He had power to drive men, to kill men, to crush men, to blind men, to compel men, but he chose to be a teacher. And from his great choice, from his great example, the world is gradually learning great lessons: To make a new world we must make new men; to

make men anew we must change their minds and hearts. In the realm of spirit Caesar has always failed—Christ has always conquered. Caesar is might; Christ is light.

Even the Great Master himself could not make a man a saint against his will. Freedom must condition manhood. Even truth cannot make a man free unless he is given freedom in choosing the truth.

The teacher offers the world truth, but he must leave the world free to receive it or to reject it. The jailer and the slave-driver may bear a rod or a sword, but the angel of deliverance that calls to a soul must bear a torch and a book. The teacher, not the tyrant, must lead the world to manhood.

The whole world needs a teacher. All the great institutions of an enlightened age accomplish their best work through teaching. The state provides a public school system and thus increases the public revenues, reduces crime, and promotes good citizenship. The church establishes

Sunday schools, sends out missionaries, prints books and magazines, and demands instructive sermons from every pulpit. All this is teaching. The home, when it does its duty and rises to its highest privileges, teaches, teaches, teaches. Thus it lays foundations of character in boy and girl that no bad company, no riotous living, no far country, no feeding of swine can altogether destroy. The health departments of nation and state and city—the medical profession everywhere— are working more and more through teaching. Even the court of the police justice is becoming a training-school in good conduct. Preventive law, preventive medicine, preventive religion, all depend upon knowledge of the truth, truly taught. No wonder the Great Teacher said, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." No wonder his own public ministry was given so largely and so grandly to teaching. No wonder Nicodemus said, "Thou art a teacher come from God."

It is the teacher that has led the world

thus far in its glorious march of progress. That teacher is sometimes a poet, sometimes a magistrate, sometimes a mother. The teacher still must lead. Cattle may be driven with whips; mobs will follow impulse; fools will delight in fancies; beasts will be content with instinct; but men want to know the truth. They demand intelligence and knowledge as a basis for conduct. Men are seeking teachers.

Nicodemus was a great man. He was great in many ways; but his greatness is most finely proved in his recognition and acknowledgment of the Great Teacher. Whatever man rises to such a recognition partakes in some measure of the Master's greatness.

II

His Method

What, now, are some of the qualities and processes of the Great Teacher's method?

In the first place, his statements were usually simple and plain. The sophist and the pedant may need to cover up their lack of resource and understanding with a showy and complicated form of words. The Delphian oracle, we may recall, was very skilful in ambiguity. Not so the Great Teacher.

Truth is like the light. Both come to us in straight lines. Whenever light or truth is deflected it is weakened. No truth is so effective as plain truth; no speech is so effective as simple speech. The Great Teacher was simple in speech, making the truth plain. Modern science is trying to reach this goal. If ancient philosophy

sought truth as a first principle, modern science is seeking it in the last analysis.

The chemist in his laboratory works toward simplicity. He seeks the elements and sets them apart. The master of rhetoric aims first of all at clearness. The business man adopts the simplest forms, the plainest marks. The best writer of advertisements knows best how to join force and brevity. Legislators are throwing away the verbiage of dark ages and are writing laws in terms that the people can understand. Medicine no longer feels it necessary to veil its wisdom in a dead language. Theology is discarding cumbersome robes and blinding hoods and is dressing in workaday clothes. Even diplomacy, the last foe of frankness, is coming to speak in plain terms.

The universe approves. Ever since the stars have smiled upon the earth, ever since the sun has shot his arrows through the clouds, ever since the chains of gravity have pulled straight, God and nature have loved straight paths. Human nature

should not be perverse. For two thousand years the plain, simple words of Jesus of Nazareth have been models for the world—for the truth-seeking and the truth-telling world. Of all men, the teacher is the truth-seeker and the truth-teller.

In the second place, the Great Teacher's method was direct. It was direct in several senses. It was direct in that he would say, as Nathan said when he looked David in the eye, "Thou art the man." He did not turn away or soften his words when error needed rebuke; neither did he disguise his pleasure when faith and courage needed approval.

Again, his method was direct in that he did not hesitate or delay when once the moment for speech or action came. More than once he waited because the time was not ripe, but he knew the signs of the times, and directly upon the stroke of occasion his word of wisdom came.

His method was direct also in that he did his teaching orally, not through the writing of letters or books. His disciples,

like those of Socrates, wrote down what the Master said; but he himself, so far as we know, wrote nothing. He met the people face to face, he taught them as man to man. In wonderful measure he exemplified the power of the spoken word, the argument of the honest voice, the eloquence of the open countenance, the magic of the kindling eye, the healthfulness of the sympathetic touch. The pen is mightier than the sword, and a drop of ink makes millions think; yet for the best response in heart and life we need a voice answering to our voice, an eye that softens to our eager look, a hand that touches ours. We read books, but we follow living teachers.

In the third place, the Great Teacher used many illustrations. Illustrations are to discourse what skylights are to a building. They let in the light—the sunlight.

Most of the illustrations that Christ used are what we call parables. He used parables so much that one of the men who heard him declared that he never spoke to the people at all except through parables. To

his class—his chosen circle of pupils—he frequently spoke without parables, but with the multitude he used parables habitually.

The old Greek teachers had two interesting words by which they distinguished class-teaching from public lecturing—teaching in a small circle from teaching in a large circle. Teaching in a small circle, that is, teaching a small group of intimate pupils in a familiar way, they called esoteric teaching; teaching in a large circle, or, as we might say, standing in a small circle, but speaking mainly to those who stand around it on the outside, they called exoteric teaching.

Using these terms in reference to Jesus, we may say that his familiar discourses with his disciples, like those recorded in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of St. John, are esoteric teaching; while those addresses to the multitude, like those recorded in the 13th chapter of St. Matthew, were exoteric teaching. These and other parables were finely exoteric.

But the parables that Christ employed

with the multitude were not merely illustrations—skylights to truth: they had a special value, a value in pedagogical equity, that we shall consider further on.

In the fourth place, the Great Teacher's method was progressive. This means simply that he began with the easier things and gradually led up to those that were more difficult. In present-day terms it would be said that he gave his instruction in a carefully graded course.

For example, it was not until after a year or so of preparatory lessons that he began, at Caesarea Philippi, to teach his followers that part of his work was suffering and death. This was a hard fact for his pupils to grasp. This is doubtless the reason why he did not give it to them sooner. It is also the reason why he gave it to them so many times afterward, each time telling them a little more. It was so hard for them to understand, to accept, that he took it up at different times and presented it in different ways, and finally had to prove it in an awful object-lesson, the

tragedy of Calvary, before it was comprehended and accepted.

The things we do not wish to believe are always hard to understand. Many a teacher and many a pupil in every school are slow to appreciate the hard facts of failure. Nowhere does the teacher prove his skill, his wisdom, his title, so well as on the painful heights of difficulty.

The fact that Christ's teaching was progressive is apparent in many connections. Consider another example. At the Last Supper, when Simon Peter objected to a demonstration that he did not comprehend, Christ said to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

By this time Peter had been in training two or three years, but he had not yet reached the end of the wisely graded course that his Master had laid out for him—he was not yet able to see a reason for some of the exercises required of him. The law of his people had been a pedagogue to lead him to the Great Teacher, and he

had walked with the Teacher along many paths; under his direction he had solved many difficult problems; but the end was not yet, and the reasons were not always plain.

A good many of us, perhaps, in our childhood, studied grammar a good while before we knew what it was or what it was for, but possibly we knew later. Possibly, too, our teachers finally learned a better way, but it all took time. In our schools every day are thousands of pupils who do not know why they are called upon to draw maps, to practice dull exercises on a piano, or to learn all the words in the spelling book, but they may come to a height of vision further on.

In familiar terms, they are not yet at the end of the grades. Indeed, a course of instruction that has an end is not a good course. Whenever a school boy or a school man reaches a point where he sees nothing ahead of him to learn or to study it will mean one of two things: either that he is blind or that his teacher has been a failure.

The Great Teacher did not plan or promise to go in visible presence with his pupils all the way to the end of the course he had laid out for them. That sorrowful night in the upper room, just before Gethsemane and Calvary, when he told them so much, he said finally:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

Then he reassured them by saying that their next Teacher would soon come to them and that he would guide them into a completer understanding of all the marvelous things his lips had spoken. And so it turned out. The work of the next three months, under the next Teacher, made many things plain that had not been plain before.

The course of instruction was progressive. One teacher followed another, one truth was built upon another, one experience ripened into another. Yet it was all in accordance with the progressive plan of the Great Teacher. He said of his successor and of the work that he should do:

"He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. And he will shew you things to come."

Thus was given not only a view, but also a vision.

In the fifth place, the Great Teacher in his method was reiterative. Often he said the same thing more than once—not always in the same words, but the same thing, in the same or in different words.

Some teachers have a horror of repetition. Not so the Great Teacher. He evidently recognized the fact that repetition or reiteration is often necessary. It is necessary in some cases to aid the understanding, in other cases to aid the memory, in still other cases, perhaps, to prick the conscience. In all practical arts it is essential to skill.

At a certain university, for many years, was a professor who was noted for the elegant and exact form of his lectures. Each lecture fitted perfectly into the course of

which it was a part. It was at the same time finished and complete in itself. The language in which he presented the truth was chaste, concise, and dignified. He always seemed to use words enough for a rounded-out statement, but never a word too many. Moreover, he had mastered the annoying problem of making his lectures coincide exactly with the prescribed time limits—he always finished just as the bell rang. He never ran over time, he never ran out ahead of time. Every lecture, every paragraph, every sentence, every word was nicely fitted into its place—perfectly adjusted to time, thought, and system.

Now, having said all this about the learned professor's method, it may be needless to say what I started out to say—already you have guessed it: The professor never repeated anything. At least his pupils said so. Often I have heard them say, "Get it when he says it, for he will never say it again."

Such method may be excellent for put-

ting a premium upon attention, but whether it is the best for helping the average child, the average human soul, in its stumbling upward toward the light may be a question. But my aim here is not to criticize the learned professor: he was a good teacher and a noble man: my aim is to glue attention to the fact that the Great Teacher did repeat.

His repetition, as already suggested, is not to be found, it may be, so much in words and figures as in facts and lessons. He would give the same lesson several times to the same class, sometimes in the same form, sometimes in a different form; but it was the same lesson. Instead of padding the curriculum he multiplied angles of vision. Instead of teaching everything under the sun, he made a few things touch the sun.

How fortunate for the millions of little strangers in the world, the millions of little children in the schools, that the world's greatest teacher was ever ready to give his pupils another chance!

Once more, in his method the Great Teacher shows a marvelous adaptability. By his wise and discerning skill the person, the topic, the place, the time, the medium of thought are enhanced with unusual values.

All good method is in some form skilful adaptation. In adaptation the Great Teacher was a master. For example, he illustrated the qualities required for heavenly citizenship by placing in the midst of his class a little child. Just as all the visible world may be mirrored in a single dewdrop, so all of human possibility and destiny in the mental, moral, and spiritual world is mirrored in a little child. It stands near enough to God to reflect the light of his countenance, and near enough to us to touch our hearts. Beauty and innocence and trustfulness are its characteristics. At the same time it is hungering and thirsting for the elements of real growth, real strength, real life. It is eager for service—eager to be helpful. Its hands are ready long before they are skilful. It

is hopeful and happy. Its claims are obvious and are acknowledged and accepted by all.

The fitness and the completeness of this particular object-lesson appear more fully still when we observe that it is universal in its presence and in its appeal. The majority of figures and illustrations are more or less local or short-lived. They are limited to a field or die with an age. Each one may be familiar and perfectly understood in its own particular country, in its own particular time, but comparatively few illustrations are fully understood and appreciated by all peoples of all ages.

But this concrete presentation of the kingdom of heaven, as put before his class by the Great Teacher in a little child, is of universal interest and is everywhere familiar. To every normal human being it is intelligible and forceful.

If the greath truths of the ages were offered to only a few people, then doubtless the Master would have explained them by comparisons that only a few could

understand; but since they are eternal and offered to all he presents them in figures that all can understand. Wherever humanity is measured by life and death, there childhood is known and loved. Wherever and whenever men and women are found seeking the better ways, there is the little child through whom truth and life may be understood. Thus shall it be to the end of the ages. Of parents and of teachers, of legislators and of educators, it shall ever be said, "A little child shall lead them."

The little child is the Great Teacher's masterpiece illustration, but the wonderful breadth and power of appeal in many of the illustrations he employed become more and more apparent as we study them. What, for example, are more widely and intimately known than bread and water? or farming? or fishing? or the blowing of the wind? And what are more essentially related to life, to progress, to happiness? All peoples know about these things, all nations recognize their importance. All

these things he used as illustrations in his teaching.

But, as already intimated, he went a step or two farther. He enhanced these things by association. He not only chose illustrations many of which are universally familiar and significant, but he seized these things and introduced them at what we would call, I suppose, the psychological moment. Mating them thus happily with the subject and the occasion, and sometimes too in a striking way with the particular pupil or class of pupils he was facing, he set them on heights of power never to be obscured.

It was at Jacob's well, when a woman came to draw water, that he taught that beautiful lesson of the water of life. It was on the day just after he had fed the five thousand, when the multitude came thronging again, hungry for fishes and loaves, that he spoke to them of the bread of life. It was while Peter and Andrew and James and John were at work, fishing, that he called them to be fishers of men.

And that night with Nicodemus, when he was explaining to him the new birth, and illustrating the nature thereof by reference to the wind, we can hardly escape the conviction that the wind was blowing at the very moment, and that the figure was heightened in its effect by a hushed pause, both men listening, while the casements rattled or the branches of a swaying tree brushed weirdly against the side of the house. Then the Great Teacher spoke:

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

What an acknowledgment of mystery! What a confidence of certainty! What an impression of power! The whence and the whither of the gale were hidden in mystery, but the fact of its presence was indisputable and its power could not be measured or stayed.

In its character and application this figure would prove any teacher great. The

attitude of the Great Teacher in this incident should charge humility upon the arrogant and plant courage in the faint. An hour with him upon a wind-rocked summit should prove an inspiration to any teacher.

III

His Aim

It is aim that enhances effort, that justifies expenditure, that determines method. Having considered at some length the methods of the Great Teacher, let us now try to approximate his aim.

From what we have already seen it is reasonably certain that his aim in teaching was to make the truth plain to the understanding of the sincere inquirer.

But this was not all of his aim. He had an aim to accomplish through his teaching as well as in his teaching. If in his teaching his aim was to make the truth plain, his aim through his teaching was to make knowledge bear fruit—to make knowledge of the truth bear fruit in character and life. Thus, and thus only, could he say:

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Three great words are these: Knowledge, truth, and freedom. Truth is an objective reality that may become a subjective possession. Knowledge is the harvest of intelligence in which the wheat of truth is seeking to displace the tares of untruth. Freedom is a condition of matter or spirit in which all rights are realized in the path of highest destiny. When knowledge is perfect with truth then, and not till then, is the spirit free. The body may still be chained, but neither hell nor Hun can bind the soul. John Bunyan in Bedford jail, John Milton in perpetual night, St. John on Patmos isle are immortal and indisputable arguments.

It was not enough for the Great Teacher to know and to have others know; he aimed at having his pupils' knowledge perfect with truth, in order that their spirits might dwell in perfect freedom.

As already indicated, the illustrations chosen by the Great Teacher were adapted not only to the subject and the occasion, but also to the hearer—to enlighten the

sincere inquirer, to baffle the trifler and the enemy of truth.

"Why do you speak to the multitude in parables?" his followers one day asked him. His answer in substance seems to mean this:

"Many of the people are not willing to learn. They close their eyes when I offer proof. They close their ears against the plainest arguments. They are not really looking to learn or listening to understand. Therefore I speak to them in parables."

This exposition gives us one or two additional marks for our notion of a parable. Now we see that while parables are illustrations, and in so far are windows admitting light into the temple of truth, they are at the same time windows with curtains. A curtain allows enough light to enter for those inside to see, but it also prevents the curious throng outside from gazing in. The way to have the benefit of the window and the curtain too is to come inside the house.

The Great Teacher was continually in-

viting the multitude to come inside. Inside all was displayed to view. He never failed to explain a parable, fully and sympathetically, when one came inside and desired to know.

Such adaptation in the schoolroom is pedagogical equity. It corresponds to jurisprudence in the courts of law. Justice does not always follow the straight-edge of the statute; it must often be made alive by the purpose and the spirit, when the inflexible letter would be its death. Justice not only makes open the paths to paradise, it also must close the gates against robbers and thieves.

Accordingly, the parables of Jesus were marvels of adaptation and justice. They made the ways of knowledge beautiful and inviting, yet hedged them about with bars of defence. Mental and moral equity, eternal fitness and justice, forbid the thief and the hypocrite from entering the fields of light to carry off the pearls and treasures of life.

Whosoever hath sincere desire to know

the truth, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not the desire to learn, or the will to labor, from him shall be taken away even the little that he hath.

The Great Teacher had a perfect sense of equity as well as a full consciousness of power and authority. He never worked a miracle to satisfy mere curiosity; he did not cast his pearls before swine; yet he toiled without rest to help the grateful-hearted, and he never hesitated to break a convention to free a soul.

IV

The Matter of His Teaching

Any comprehensive or adequate discussion of this topic would require a volume. It would also lead necessarily and properly into the field of theology. In this particular survey we shall touch the subject in only a few places, and shall employ chiefly the eyes and the speech of pedagogy.

The matter of Christ's teaching is to be found most explicitly set forth in the four gospels, as written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In these gospels certain parts stand out with special prominence; for example: The Sermon on the Mount; the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son; the sermons on the Good Shepherd, the True Vine, and the Bread of Life; the conversations with Nathanael, Nicodemus, and the woman of Samaria; the discourses on prayer, the

prayer for the disciples, and the announcements concerning the Holy Spirit.

It is hardly necessary to remark that the Great Teacher did not deal in any technical or professional way with such things as art, mathematics, natural science, or literature. His specialties were religion and life. Accordingly, he did deal intensively with questions of theology, ethics, civics, and sociology. Some of the particular things that he emphasized with approval were faith, sincerity, purity, forbearance, respect for the temple, modesty, generosity, and justice. Some of the particular things that he condemns with scathing indignation are envy, vain conceit, pretense, and hypocrisy. He constantly seeks to show that religion is a life of the heart, of the soul, of the desires, and not an outward form of show or ceremony. He shows most clearly that a new birth by divine grace is necessary to lift the soul of man into heavenly fellowship. The supremacy of the spiritual over the material and temporal is repeatedly demon-

strated. The duty of good citizenship is fully recognized.

One of the greatest facts that Christ taught, and the one perhaps that necessitated the most radical readjustment on the part of his disciples for acceptance is this: That his gifts are for the whole world—for every nation, race, and tongue. It took his most intimate pupils ten years or more to apprehend this truth.

When we say that the subject-matter of the Great Teacher's lessons is most explicitly set forth in the four gospels, the statement must not be misunderstood and taken to imply that nothing definite is found elsewhere. The whole New Testament is filled with the matter of his teaching, in direct or indirect form. And, from another standpoint, the same thing is true of the Old Testament. The Old Testament, we may say, was the Great Teacher's textbook.

The Old Testament scriptures were the Bible of Jesus's childhood. They were the basis of all the commentaries that filled the

shelves and the memories of his teachers. When he himself began to teach he evidently discarded the commentaries, but he did not discard his Bible. In large measure it contained the matter of his teaching. He did not discredit it—he enhanced it. Let us consider how he used it.

In the first place, he mastered it. When the teacher knows the textbook it means a great deal. The Great Teacher knew his. It gave him the glorious history of his people and invested the mountains round about Jerusalem with a potent charm. How those annals must have stirred him, even from the age of twelve, when first he went up with the fervent pilgrims that thronged the sacred gates! It gave him the best poetry of his people—the psalms of David, the proverbs of Solomon, the matchless epic of Job. It kept alive for him in thrilling stories the heroes and heroines of his people—the conquering faith of Abraham, the imperial genius of Moses, the valor and victories of Joshua, the friendship of Jonathan and David, the

devotion and loyalty of Ruth, the courage of Daniel and Esther, the honor and wisdom of Joseph, the vision of Sheba's queen. It gave to him the promises that cherished his people and the prophecies that centered in himself. He knew it all — he used it all.

He used his textbook, but he used it as a master. It means much when the teacher knows the textbook; it means much to have a good textbook; but it means most when the teacher is a master, with the book or without it. One who is a slave to a book is not a teacher in the highest sense. The Great Teacher had a great book and handled it greatly. He knew what it contained, he could find what he wanted without an index or a concordance, he could quote passages from memory, and he could cite specific references upon occasion.

In the second place, he vitalized his textbook—he vitalized the matter it contained as he tendered it to humanity.

This is obvious in familiar instances;

for example, in the Sermon on the Mount. He refers to the textbook—he repeats certain of the laws or the commandments—but he gives them a new meaning, he brings them down to conscience and shows how they touch his hearers. Words that had long been dead took on new life—stood invested with new power; their values were no longer doubtful or obscured.

Are we not seeking today for teachers who can take the old books, the old subjects, the old truths, and through them vitalize the curriculum? It is some years since anybody discovered a really new subject; it is some ages since anybody coined a new truth. Our chances for discovering new matter are not as promising as they might be; we must rely mainly upon finding new teachers—teachers with new vision, new power—who can take the matter we have and vitalize it in the life that we must live. Teachers who can do this are in demand. When one appears who can take the book and give it real meaning in terms of humanity the people

of his time, even the casual crowd, will pause and listen.

Witness the incident at Nazareth. The young teacher went to Sunday school and stood up to read a lesson. The fact that he was young, that he had lived at Nazareth from childhood, and that everybody in the church knew him, was all very much against him; but he soon proved that he could command attention.

The part of the textbook used that day was the prophecy of Isaiah. The young teacher opened the book and turned to the passage he wanted. Then he began to read:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

He closed the book, handed it to an attendant, and sat down. Then he began to speak—to explain and apply what he

had read. The people all kept their eyes upon him and listened intently to every word. What he said was essentially this:

"These statements here in the book apply to you and to me, and are being carried out right now before you."

Attention tightened. He went on to say that he expected to be questioned and doubted and challenged, but that nevertheless he was going to tell them the truth—he was going to tell them the truth about themselves and about himself. He soon charged them with the fact that Isaiah was speaking of him and of them, and that they were going to suffer a great loss because of their stupidity and skepticism.

The lesson was burned in. Naturally it hurt—such an exposition and application did not please the audience and they rose up to mob the young teacher. But there is no question that he vitalized the text; and we see how he did it. The case serves as a fine demonstration of pedagogical efficiency. Teachers in training may well observe and take notes.

Other examples might be found in which the effect was different but no less striking, when approval and enthusiastic support were tendered the Great Teacher. The matter of his teaching was important and it was made concrete and vital to such a degree that it could not be ignored.

With reference to subject-matter we shall notice just one more phase—Christ's use of the beautiful.

The Great Teacher did not strain after smoothness or gracefulness—he took hold of people and facts as they were; but when conditions left him free to choose his subjects and his illustrations he naturally and habitually turned toward the world beautiful.

How full of perennial charm are his pictures of the shepherd and his sheep, of the vine and its teeming branches, of the virgins with their lamps, of the Father and the sparrows, of the lilies in the verdant field, of the little child and heaven! The flowering acres of the sower are rich with beauty in spite of the thorns and tares.

The wonder of the grain of wheat is fascinating in spite of death. The picture of the Good Samaritan on the mountain highway is framed in highland vistas and colored light. The story of the marriage feast is warm and glowing notwithstanding a bitter disappointment. The parable of the wayward boy who returns to his father is charming for all of its pathos and pain.

In company with the Great Teacher we discover hidden treasures, we find pearls of great price, we hear wind music, we taste sweet waters of life, we walk in a great light, we enter a house of many mansions. Clothing simplicity, adorning directness, enforcing illustration, expanding with progress, justifying repetition, enhancing adaptation, the beautiful is ever at his right hand, a winsome hand-maiden of truth.

V

His Pupils

The teacher means much to his pupils, but often the pupils mean more to the teacher. Even to the Great Teacher his disciples must have meant infinitely more than their names or their offices can suggest to us. Their intelligent understanding, their responsive appreciation, their forthright conduct gave him strength and joy; their indifference, their ingratitude, their culpable failures gave him intense pain. One day, when his companions were hungry, he could smile and say, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." Another day, when relatives from home called to speak with him, he would not see them. On one occasion he could exclaim in triumph, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." At another time he poured out his heart in grief and disappointment over a beloved city.

What made the difference? It was the attitude and the conduct of his pupils.

What a pageant spreads out before the imagination as his numerous pupils rise, pause, and pass in long procession!

Near the head of the column is a little group of four or five men, who first were disciples of John the Baptist in the Jordan Valley. Next, perhaps, we see a bride and groom and wedding guests. Then, it may be, we see Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Close to them are four brothers and two or more sisters of Nazareth, sons and daughters of a carpenter, all skeptics at first; some, at least, helpers finally. They are followed by the crowd that filled the synagogue at Nazareth on a certain sabbath—the crowd that first was pleased and then was enraged.

What thousands are these? They are the multitude that listened to the Beatitudes one day on a mountain side. What thousands are those? They are the multitude that was fed one day with loaves and fishes and on another day with living bread.

What throngs come yonder? The great multitude that heard him by the sea, when he sat in a ship and taught them many things by parables. And near them is another great company, the throng that crowded up to Simon Peter's door one evening as the sun went down.

Here and there are smaller groups—the Three from Bethany, the Two that walked to Emmaus, the One that dwelt across the sea; the Greeks who sought him at the feast; the centurion of Capernaum; the woman of Tyre and Sidon; the rich young ruler; Jairus, ruler of the synagogue; short Zaccheus; Simon, the hospitable Pharisee; the woman of Jacob's well and her honest neighbors of Samaria.

And yonder, in the place of favor, are the Chosen Twelve. Just behind them come the Chosen Seventy; and near them, with honor crowned, are Mary called Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Susanna, and many other women who followed him loyally from place to place, supporting his work with their wealth.

Apart somewhat, with downcast faces, is that large group, once his followers, who took offence one day at some hard truth he taught, and thenceforth walked no more with him. Near them are those hundreds and thousands who saw him cleanse the temple, who heard the rattle of the money-changers' tables, who listened to him daily as he taught and almost believed him. And finally, there comes a great multitude with music, with shouting and with singing, with garlands and waving palms, crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The Great Teacher's pupils were numbered by the thousands. They were both men and women, adults and children. Some were rich, some were poor; some were small, some were great; some were brilliant, some were dull; some were devoted, some were skeptical; some gave him joy, some gave him pain; but to all he gave his life.

As already indicated, his pupils came to the Great Teacher sometimes singly, some-

times in small groups, sometimes in crowds. He must have spoken with remarkable force and distinctness, else the great audience of eight or ten thousand that sometimes attended could not have heard or understood; and there must have been a thrill in the numbers that stirred his heart; but we somehow think of him as at his best in a small company close about him. Indeed, his personal talks with one—with Nicodemus, with the Samaritan woman, with Mary of Bethany, with the honest scribe—must have been wonderfully rich and helpful.

In these personal interviews and in the various associations that make intimate acquaintance, we may think of each of the Great Teacher's pupils as contributing some particular stimulus to effort and interest. Nicodemus, for example, was an educated man, a teacher himself; he was accordingly treated as such. He was at once given for consideration one of the profoundest and most fundamental questions possible. The woman of Samaria, on

the other hand, was evidently rustic and untrained, though naturally keen and rich in experience. See how gently and easily, yet how deftly and forcefully, the Great Teacher introduces the lesson to her. Moreover, the truth taught her, while it is essential and fundamental, is much more concrete and familiar than the one presented to Nicodemus.

Two frequent pupils of the Master were the sisters of Bethany, Martha and Mary. Mary is world-famous as a pupil; she is often held up in sermons and lectures as the ideal pupil. She sat at the Teacher's feet and listened so intently and so long to his words that her sister became impatient and interrupted the teaching. Martha is often censured as being materialistic and commonplace. But both were really intelligent and appreciative. The Teacher's love went out to both, and also to their brother. Their home was most congenial to him. As a matter of fact, it may be that Martha grasped his teaching more thoroughly and more practically than

did Mary. Mary was emotional and perhaps mystical; Martha was clear-headed, capable, and self-controlled. She evidently was older than Mary, was the manager of the house, and had her hands as well as her head full of necessary tasks. Yet her memory, in a crisis, went as quickly and as far as Mary's. Mary's message was her message. And when death came ahead of the Great Friend we may well believe that Martha was still the main stay of the house. And when the Great Friend came it was Martha's quick ear that heard of his approach, it was her firm step that first hasted toward his coming. Her first word was a word of faith rather than of chiding; it was vibrant with a hidden hope. Her next word was a word of knowledge—of vision that pierced far through the clouds of time. Her last word was a word of confidence, of perfect trust, in the Great Teacher who was also the Great Friend. Mary in that dark hour also showed her strength, but it was not the strength of Martha. Mary was a devoted pupil, who

thought habitually of the spiritual; Martha was a capable pupil, who worked habitually with the material; but in a time that tested souls Martha proved that she too had heard and treasured the words of life.

One of the quickest and keenest of the Great Teacher's pupils was Nathanael, who was probably known otherwise as Bartholomew, one of the Twelve. At their first meeting Nathanael's logic in one or two great leaps chained his knowledge to sublimest heights. One of the slowest and dullest was Philip, Philip of Bethsaida. After two or three years of training and of association with the Great Teacher he still was blind. "Show us the Father," he begged one night, just as if the Master had not been doing that very thing for a long time.

But Philip was a good worker. It was not half a day, it seems, after he became a pupil until he found Nathanael and brought him to the Teacher. Nathanael hesitated at first and began to argue. But Philip had too much sense to argue; he just

said, "Come and see." And Nathanael came. One who could enlist the service of men like Nathanael certainly had some qualifications for apostleship. He was companionable and approachable. When the Greek strangers, for example, wanted to see Jesus they went first to Philip. He may have been slow in discerning the invisible, but he could see men; and the glow of the invisible in his face must have smiled welcome to acquaintance and to stranger alike. Philip was not a failure.

One of the most censured pupils of the Great Teacher was Thomas. He seems to have been too much of a rationalist. About the best thing we can say of him is that he was honest. He acknowledged the truth when he could no longer deny it. He openly avowed his change of front when he had the evidence that he demanded. This is more than some men will do. The real student will not form definite opinions in advance, he will not jump to conclusions upon insufficient evidence, but he will accept facts without discount when they are

presented. In some of these respects Thomas seems to have been a real student. His mistake was made in refusing to accept the testimony of other men who could see just as well as he could and who were just as capable and honest as he was. If all students were to be Thomases all the books in the world would be worthless; history would have no value; all the records that the archaeologists are finding would be thrown away; all the past experience of the race would count for nothing. The Master evidently thought that Thomas was too skeptical. A good man once refused to admit that he had a backbone—he had not seen it. He was a logical descendant of Thomas.

The group of pupils that perhaps discouraged the Great Teacher most were the sons and daughters of Mary and Joseph. There were four boys, James, Joses, Simon, and Judas; and there were two or more girls, whose names we do not know. By the people of Nazareth these

young folks were called the brothers and sisters of Jesus.

They grew up with him, and when he began to teach and to proclaim his mission they naturally paid little attention to him, except to ridicule and discourage him. On one occasion at least they evidently tried to interrupt him when he was trying to get the serious attention of his audience. But finally some of them, at least, accepted his teaching; and one of them, according to tradition, died for it. This was James, who appears in a splendid capacity in the fifteenth chapter of Acts and in the epistle that bears his name. It may be that the Jude or Judas who wrote the short, fervent letter that we find near the end of our canon was also one of the four brothers.

Peter was the most forward pupil in the great Master's school. He was continually jumping ahead of the Teacher, saying things or doing things that he was not told to say or do. But he was true and efficient in spite of his mistakes. Judas perhaps expected to hear something that he did not

hear, or see something that he did not see, or get something that he did not get; hence he was disappointed and became a most bitter disappointment to his Teacher and to his classmates. Matthew perhaps got a great deal more than he expected. He was raised to great heights from the lowest depths—he was a publican and was made an apostle. The gospel that he wrote is one of the Christian classics.

Two pupils that must have given the Great Teacher a full measure of joy as well as occasional moments of pain were James and John, the two brothers from Galilee. They were turbulent, ambitious, masterful. One day they came requesting that they might have the places of highest honor; on another day they wanted to burn up a whole village because the inhabitants turned a cold shoulder to the Master. At another time they antagonized another disciple because he did not take orders from them. John could outrun Simon Peter; James died first of all the Twelve, a shining mark of Herod's wrath. John,

instead of being the soft-handed weakling that painters make him, was the very Hamilcar Barca of the band. Yet his soul was as deep as the ocean; his heart was a magneto of sympathy, for all its red blood; his vision excelled Plato's.

Plato was much to Socrates, but we may be certain that John was more to Jesus. Plato, it is said, gave pet names to some of his pupils. For instance, he called Aristotle "Mind." The Great Teacher did something of the same nature, when he called Simon "Rock," and when he termed James and John "Sons of Thunder." He had special work for them; he gave them special names. Scipio Africanus, Aristides the Just, Charles Martel, and Henry the Lion of Justice were not more highly honored.

The Great Teacher chose the Twelve from the whole number of his pupils for three specific things:

(1) To be with him;
(2) To be apostles;
(3) To have power.

St. Mark in his gospel so states his purposes. Can any pupils expect more or ask more from their teachers? In more expanded form, this is what they were given:

(1) Close association and fellowship with the Teacher; knowledge of his knowledge, wisdom of his wisdom, spirit of his spirit, life of his life;

(2) A commission from him—his sign and seal; a charge from him to go out and carry his word to all the world;

(3) Skill from him, power from him, to do what the world needs.

And just as the Great Teacher did his great work in and through this small number, so he required the Twelve at first to work in a small field and with only a few people. Intension came first, then extension. Accordingly, when he first sent them out he said:

"Go not to the Gentiles; go not to the Samaritans; go only to your own people."

He knew that limitation and concentration are necessary to preparation and consummation. Young and impulsive pupils

often forget this. They try to leap over the first three—they think only of the last. But the pupils of the Master were not allowed to leap. Then when finally he said, "Go into all the world," they could go with all his power behind them.

VI

His Life

This chapter is not a chronicle of dates and incidents; it is an effort to appreciate the Great Teacher's supreme gift—Life. Life was his supreme power; life was his supreme gift.

He declared himself to be life. He declared his words to be life. He declared his purpose to be the giving of life—the more abundant life.

Alexander gave to the world of the East the language and the art of Greece; the Caesars gave to the world of the West the law of imperial Rome; but to all the world, both East and West, the Teacher's gift was life. Mohammed and his followers, coming in a dark and troubled age, gave to many peoples a splendid civilization; the Crusaders, seeking to displace the Crescent with the Cross and to open a highway to

the Holy Land, gave to all succeeding ages a precious heritage of faith and high devotion; but He, in whose name the pilgrims prayed and sang and the Crusaders fought, came that all might have life, and have it more abundantly.

The best things that kings and statesmen have given the world are valuable only as life makes them so. Charlemagne, Alfred the Great, William the Silent, and Washington bestowed upon their countries and upon the world such gifts as learning, liberty, prudence, and fortitude; yet they all would have deemed it a higher privilege to add to these the supreme gift of the Great Teacher.

Among conquerors we have sought for our comparison the greatest; among sovereigns and statesmen we have sought the best. What of the world's great teachers? Among them, who were the greatest? and what were their best gifts?

Through Moses was given an exalted moral law — the Ten Commandments. Buddha taught the blessedness of goodness.

Zoroaster urged an eternal vigilance against evil. Confucius made obedience to parents and reverence for authority a fundamental and an abiding virtue. Socrates taught that knowledge leads to virtue; and Plato sought for virtue through health and beauty of the soul. Only the Great Teacher could lift his pupils higher. He came with life and love.

We would not confuse spiritual life and physical life. Yet who can separate them? Neither would we confuse the life powers of the Great Teacher with the life powers of other teachers. Yet who can separate them? No man, no woman, will claim life power such as the Great Teacher had, yet may we not claim some life power from him? His great gift is life—life through love. Is not this also humanity's best gift?

In a fair city of the South, where the roaring ways of traffic meet, stands a monument of bronze. It is the statue of a man holding in his arms a little child. The man is young—he had life before him; he had

promise of long life; but he gave his life to the child. A house was burning. The child was in it, unable, amid the noise and smoke, to find its way out. Then came the man. To save the child he gave his life.

It was a gift—'twas not a loss. The child may be a man today. Whenever he pauses, with uncovered head, before that figure of bronze, he must say, "I have his life—he gave it to me."

Why do we honor those soldiers who carry their wounded comrades out of danger above even those who slay scores of the enemy? Those who rescue give life. Now and then in the hospitals is wrought a thrilling story of the transfusion of blood from one who is strong to one who is dying. This transfusion of blood is transfusion of life. Why do we honor those women who carry the Red Cross and the white cross into camps and hospitals so far above those who waste their lives in idleness and ease? The cross-bearers go forth that men may have life. Why do we honor the faithful preacher and pastor, who lives scantily and

dies in poverty? He gives his life to others. Not only does he teach the truth that is life, not only does he by example give the inspiration that is life, he also actually shortens his own life for the sake of his people.

And what is the supreme glory of motherhood? It is not merely the giving of new life to the vigor and welfare of the race, it is also the loving sacrifice of life for the life of every human being.

The teacher who has learned of the Great Teacher rejoices in the young life which he sees growing and expanding day by day and going out to bless the world; but at the same time he realizes that his own life is going out. Every year of service is a gift of his own life. But it is a gift, not a loss. He would not have it otherwise. He finds in this supreme gift—the gift of life through love—his supreme joy.

"For he has builded Youth.
Oh, never can the tempest rend the dreams
That he has launched across the mists of space,
Nor the black night engulf the hills of green

Whereon his flocks are pastured; all that Time
Has given men will die—but only his,
The gift of Youth in long procession,
Can never pass—Youth with its eternal dream!"

There is just one other phase of His Life that we shall consider here. It is the soul-lifting phase presented by St. John in these words:

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

This is certainly the Teacher's text.

His life was a light. He came that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly; and the life he had, the life he gave, was light.

This splendid combination puts life into beautiful and harmonious association. It puts life not with night, not with ignorance, not with clouds and darkness, but with day, with knowledge, with sunshine, with clear skies and glorious sunsets, with rainbows and sparkling waters, with starlight on the mountains and moonlight on the sea, with the dawn-song of birds, with truth and frankness, with honesty and plain dealing,

with spotless white robes and open records, with the laughter of children, with the clean hands of purity, with flowers of heaven and the smiles of angels.

What finer thing can be said or thought of any teacher than this?

"His life was a light!"

Thus was His Life.

VII

His Consciousness of a Mission

Nicodemus said to Jesus, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God."

To Nicodemus this knowledge was evidently a settled conviction. With the Great Teacher himself it must have been an ever-present consciousness. In his own declaration, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," we feel the vital throb of this consciousness. His mission was ever before him. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day," he asserts at another place; and again, when others are perhaps hungry and faint, he declares: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

Hardly any man could be sent as ambassador and minister plenipotentiary

from one imperial court to another without having the great fact constantly in mind. It would give him a heavy sense of responsibility, yet at the same time it would be a perpetual stimulus and inspiration.

Was it not so even with the Great Teacher? He came as Truth, as Light, as Life. He knew it. Endowed with highest gifts, he was sent, charged with highest service. He could never forget. Yet this heavy charge of supreme obligation also carried with it the unmistakable sense of supreme authority and invincible right. A commission with the eternal seal of divinity upon it gave his words and his work unshakable fortitude. It was an unfailing source of strength in the face of ingratitude and misunderstanding. It was not necessary for others to approve him or to acknowledge his claims. He had the unfailing consciousness of his mission within himself, and he could go forward unwaveringly to the full consummation of his purpose.

So it must have been with the exile shepherd of Midian, from the fateful hour when he stood on holy ground beside the burning bush and heard the Voice. At first he said, "Who am I, that I should go?" But soon he felt that the flame was also within him, and he could say, "I AM hath sent me!"

Isaiah once exclaimed, "Woe is me! I am a man of unclean lips." Then flew a seraphim with a live coal from the altar fire. Thenceforth forever he heard the word, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips." At Bethlehem one day a shepherd boy, almost forgotten, came in from the hills because a prophet called. He went out a king, for he knew that the holy oil was on his head. Another day, on the sounding shores at Miletus, in Asia Minor, an old man stood and declared, "None of these things move me." Years before his King had spoken, his Lord had said: "Thou art a chosen one. Thou shalt bear my name before the nations and to kings."

In none of those exalted souls could the

sense of a mission ever cease. They were chosen and anointed; the insignia of their office was ever before their eyes; the voice of holy calling was ever in their ears; the consciousness of right in a divine vocation was a panoply of strength.

Men and women whose visions hold through thick and thin remind us of the King's knights. Youth with purpose, years of training, nights of prayer and vigil, the stroke of a sword, a ringing charge, and the knight sped on his way. Far he might ride, long the years might grow, but ever in his shield he saw himself a knight; and ever as he rode he heard the words of the King:

"I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood-errant of this realm and all
The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.
I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King as if he were

Their conscience, and their conscience as their King;
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ;
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs."

Is it too much to hope that in some measure every teacher may be conscious of a divine mission? The temple of Vesta was clean and the altar fire unfailing only so long as the attendant virgins esteemed themselves as priestesses and their task as a sacred service. Feudalism flowered into chivalry and chivalry became a glorious heritage only because the knights of old took their vows unto God as well as unto man. In all the ages those men and women who have served God and humanity most helpfully, most nobly, have had an abiding sense of high obligation. They have taken themselves and their work most seriously. Like the shepherd boy of Bethlehem, they carry with them the memory of a gracious anointing with holy oil; like the urgent seer of Judah, they feel upon their lips the fiery touch from an ever-burning altar.

The teacher who has an intense but sane

sense of divine appointment can but speak with authority and right. He will quicken his words with power. He knows that he has come that the children of the world may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. Indifference and ingratitude may cloud his joy, but can never abate his courage or dull the edge of his purpose; for he has an unfailing witness within himself. He, like Nicodemus, grows valiant upon a great faith; he, like the Great Teacher himself, gladly gives his life that the world may live.

Index

Adaptation in teaching, 19, 23; 26-28
Aims of the Teacher, 25-29; 55, 56; 62, 63
Alexander, 55
Alfred the Great, 56
Andrew and Peter, 22
Another chance, 18
Beauty and truth, 38, 39
Bread of life, 22; 30
Brethren of Jesus, 49, 50
Buddha, 56
Bunyan, 26
Caesar, 4
Caesarea Philippi, 12
Character an aim, 25
Charlemagne, 56
Chivalry, 65, 66
Choosing to teach, 3
Civics, 31
Clearness an aim, 25
Concentration for preparation, 53, 54
Confucius, 57
Courage in education, 62-67
Crusaders, The, 55, 56
David, 3; 64
Delphian oracle, 7
Directness in method, 9, 10
Equity in education, 28, 29
Esoteric teaching, 11
Ethics, 31
Exoteric teaching, 11
Faith and power, 62-67
Four Gospels, The, 30; 32
Freedom and manhood, 4
Freedom and truth, 1-6; 25, 26
Gameliel, 2
Good citizenship, 32
Graded course, A, 12, 13
Greek strangers, 48
Hamilcar Barca, 52
Hard truths, 32; 43
Holy Spirit as Teacher, 15
Human touch in teaching, 10
Illustrations employed, 10-12; 21, 22; 26-28
Intension and extension, 53
Isaiah, 64
Jacob's well, 22; 42
James and John, 22; 51, 52
Jerusalem and inspiration, 33
John on Patmos, 26
Judas, 50, 51
Jurisprudence, 28
Justice and law, 28
King's knights, The, 65, 66
Kingdom of heaven illustrated, 19-21

INDEX

Knowledge and truth, 25, 26
Last Supper, The 13
Law and justice, 28
Life and light, 60, 61; 63
Life His gift, 31; 43; 55-62
Limitation in education, 53, 54
Little child illustration, 19-21
Martha and Mary, 45-47
Masterpiece illustration, 19-21
Matthew, 51
Milton, 26
Mohammed, 55
Monument in Knoxville, 57, 58
Moses, 56; 64
Motherhood, 59
Nathanael, 47, 48
Nazareth incident, 36, 37; 41
Nicodemus and Jesus, 2; 5; 6; 23; 30; 41; 44; 62; 67
Old Testament His textbook, 32-37
Pageant of pupils, 41-43
Parables of Jesus, 10-12; 26-28
Paul at Miletus, 64
Pedagogical equity, 28
Peter, 22; 50, 51
Philip, 47, 48
Plato, 52; 57
Preventive value of education, 4, 5
Progressive method, 12-16
Pupil and teacher, 40, 41; 59, 60
Purpose of the Teacher, 25-29; 55, 56; 62, 63
Reiteration in teaching, 16-18
Religion and life, 31
Rome, 55
Saul of Tarsus, 2
Simon Peter, 13; 22; 42; 50-52
Simplicity in method, 7-9
Sociology, 31
Socrates, 10; 52; 57
Teacher's text, The, 60
Teaching and social uplift, 4, 5
Textbook and Teacher, 32-37
Theology, 31
Thomas, 48, 49
Three steps in education, 52, 53
Truth as power, 25
Use of the beautiful, 38, 39
Vestal virgins, 66
Vitalizing text and truth, 34-37
Washington, 56
William the Silent, 56
Wind mystery, 23
Windows with curtains, 27
Woman of Samaria, The, 44, 45
Youth and dreams, 59, 60; 65
Zoroaster, 57

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